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Critique on Cuba

Placing the Blame

Already, Accusing Finger Points To Old Scapegoat—the CIA

By THOMAS M. O'NEILL

Washington—Almost by acclamation, the nomination for goathood in the Cuba contretemps has been awarded to Mr. Allen Dulles' Central Intelligence Agency, the big, silent organization upon which the White House relies for information. Unlike earlier occasions when fingers have been pointed in its direction, the present criticism seems to carry some merit.



Dulles

Under question is why the agency, deeply involved as it was, permitted the Cuban patriots to herald a limited landing as an imminent major invasion to the consequent enhancement of the prestige of Fidel Castro and the embarrassment before the world of the United States, and why it was misled into forecasting a popular uprising on the island that would sweep Castro out of his dictatorship.

Explanations in detail might temper the prevailing judgment that the CIA fell into a majestic blunder. Unfortunately for the agency, the nature of its assigned task is espionage and espionage permits no acknowledgment that it exists.

President Eisenhower put it succinctly at the laying of the cornerstone of the new CIA Building in suburban Virginia. He said then:

"Success of this agency cannot be advertized, failure cannot be explained."

Appropriations a Secret, Too

Even the hundreds of millions in funds appropriated to and spent by the Central Intelligence Agency are a mystery, a secret known only to top men at CIA, the President, a few in the Budget Bureau, and half a dozen members of the Appropriations Committee of the House and Senate. Its appropriations are hidden in the provisions for other branches of the government. The funds for the U-2 spy planes, operated by the CIA, turned out for example, to have been appropriated for weather observation.

All of this was intentional when the CIA was created by statute in 1947.

Until then, the United States was alone among major powers in having no peacetime espionage service. The idea had been looked upon with repugnance in this country, so much so that in 1929 a Secretary of State disbanded the decoding staff in his department because "gentlemen do not read other people's mail."

Start of 'Organized Spying'

Organized espionage on a year in and year out basis had been the practice abroad since the 16th Century, when the rivalries of England, France and the Holy Roman Empire produced the establishment, by the great powers, of permanent embassies, with ambassadors who collected information for their sovereigns. Military and naval attaches were added in time and these came to be regarded as "licensed spies," soon augmented by clandestine spying networks.

At the time of the Civil War the United States was so lacking in information resources that President Lincoln delegated the work for two years to the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

Pearl Harbor changed the American outlook. When the law setting up the Central Intelligence Agency was passed, the purpose was described as the prevention of an atomic Pearl Harbor. Sections of the law prescribed that it was to distill data gathered by itself and other agencies of the government and from these to produce "national intelligence estimates" on the potential and probable intent of other powers for the guidance of the nation's policymakers.

Financing of Cuban Venture

An additional catch-all section, providing for such other "related activities" as were found advisable, turned out to be the authority under which the CIA has ranged far, sometimes into apparent mischief making. Arguments among the several Cuban refugee organizations prior to the unhappy venture into overthrowing Castro revealed that the CIA was financing their activities. It was deep in the coup d'etat that ousted a Communist regime in Guatemala and was on the spot when revolt turned out the maniac Mohammed Mossadegh rule in Iran.